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**To:** Council

**On:** 23 March 2015

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**Report by:** Chief Executive

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**Heading:** Findings and Recommendations of the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission, the first of its kind to be established in Scotland, was set up by the Council in February 2014. The Commission was asked by the Council to consider the nature, causes and impact of poverty in Renfrewshire and to make recommendations to mitigate and minimise the impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.
- 1.2 The Commission held its inaugural meeting in April 2014 and throughout the year, the Commissioners, individuals and representatives of organisations recognised for their work associated with tackling poverty, met regularly to consider poverty as it related to themes linked to the outcomes defined in the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland.
- 1.3 During the course of its work the Commission drew on evidence from published research, heard from academics and other contributors about interventions that have been shown to make a difference and listened to Renfrewshire people affected by poverty. The Commission also learned about the significant work already being progressed by the Council and its partners to tackle poverty.
- 1.4 The Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission has now concluded its work and in publishing its report on Friday 13 March 2015, has submitted the report to the Council and Community Planning Partners for consideration. The Commission's report, 'Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire' is included at Appendix A.

- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an overview of the Commission's findings and recommendations and give members an opportunity to consider the Commission's report in the context of the Council's existing strategies for reducing the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. Members will want to consider how the Council and its partners can collectively use the Commission's evidence based approach to build a well designed, co-ordinated and effective programme of response measures to support sustainable progress in reducing the causes and impact of poverty across Renfrewshire, in line with our Community Planning targets .
- 1.6 In setting its 2015/16 budget the Council committed £6 million of its own resources to support the Tackling Poverty agenda. Although these resources are non-recurring in nature, it provides an immediate funding source to support the delivery of a partnership response.
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## 2. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- 2.1 Thank the Commission members for their time, commitment and effort and acknowledge the significant contribution the report will make to the development of the Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy.
- 2.2 In the context of the Commission's call for the Council to fully recognise the value of a partnership response, to agree to submit the Commission's report to the next meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board for consideration and ask that the Chief Executive work with community planning partners to agree a cross-partnership response to the findings and recommendations of the Commission and to report back to Council for approval on 25 June 2015.
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## 3. **Context**

- 3.1 The Renfrewshire Community Plan 2014 – 2023 sets out a challenging target to reduce child poverty to no more than 15% in any area by 2023 and in the Council Plan, a Better Future, a Better Council, the Council has set outs its ambition to bring about a reduction in the causes and impact of poverty, particularly child poverty in Renfrewshire in the period through to 2017.
- 3.2 In recognition of the Council's ambitious plans to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in poverty in Renfrewshire, in February 2014, the Council approved the establishment of a Tackling Poverty Commission. With a focus on child poverty, the

Commission's role was to act as 'critical friend' to the Council and its partners, providing independent and authoritative views on the current approach to tackling poverty, and recommendations for the Council and partners consideration that would form the basis of a new approach to tackling poverty in Renfrewshire

#### 4.

#### **Work of the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission**

##### 4.1

The Commission's report includes the terms of reference for the Commission and provides details of the Commissioners who gave of their time and expertise to support the Council and the Community Planning Partners in assessing the causes and impact of poverty in the Renfrewshire context.

##### 4.2

Pages 9 and 10 of the Commission's report sets out the Commission's approach to the task set by the Council and its partners. It provides information on the themes considered by the Commission - Maximising household income; Minimising household expenditure; Health and Well-being; Education, attainment and skills; and Housing, Place and Communities and reflects on how these themes are linked directly to the shorthand outcomes of Pockets, Prospects and Places contained within the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland.

##### 4.3

The Commission report provides information on how the Commission, over the course of ten months, considered each theme against five key questions and that this provided Commissioners with a structured way of focusing on the complexity of the issues surrounding poverty :

- How can we **prevent** child poverty?
- How can we **alleviate** child poverty?
- How can we provide families with sustainable routes to **escape** poverty
- How can we change **attitudes** to families and children living in poverty
- What are the key national policies the Council and its partners shall seek to **influence**?

##### 4.4

At its meetings, Commissioners invited academics and professionals from organisations working in areas associated with poverty, to contribute research and provide updates on their conclusions. A poverty profile of Renfrewshire was developed for consideration by Commissioners, drawing on a range of data and indices linked to the Commission's themes.

##### 4.5

The Commission's report notes that it was very important for Commissioners to hear directly from people affected by poverty. The Commission invited individuals, organisations and other interest groups to contribute to a 'Call for Evidence' over the summer months in 2014.

- 4.6 The Commission's report highlights that the submissions received from the 'Call for evidence' offer a real challenge to the way organisations provide services to people and that as a consequence, the Commission considers the way organisations work should have equal weight to the specific actions and initiatives to address poverty.
- 4.7 The Commission recognised that solutions based on meaningful partnerships are generally the most effective at delivering longer lasting change. The Commission asks the Council and the Community Planning Partnership to place cooperation between organisations and the people of Renfrewshire, at the centre of the Renfrewshire response to the Commission's work.
- 5. Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission - Findings**
- 5.1 Members are advised that the Commission's report is a summation of the Commission's work and as such, focuses on drawing out the key findings identified during the course of the Commission's work. The report makes reference to the significant body of evidence and testimony collated and analysed by the Commission, all of which are held as matter of public record in a series of appendices to the report in an area of the Renfrewshire Council website reserved for information about the Commission's work.
- 5.2 In the report, the Commission identifies a range of issues that cause poverty and impact on those living in poverty. The Commission recognises that while there is much that the Council and its partners can do locally to address child poverty, there are also major contributing factors not directly within the control of the Council or its partners. The Commission specifically highlights changes to welfare provision, including the sanctions regime associated with the increased conditionality requirements for receiving benefits; as well as the way education resources are allocated by the Scottish Government and calls on the UK and Scottish Government to bring about a change in policy in these key areas.
- 5.3 The key findings of the Commission are detailed in the Executive Summary, shown on Page 4 of the Commission's report, with more detail provided under the theme headings over pages 12 to 22. The findings reflect the conclusions reached by the Commission based on the evidence heard.
- 5.4 The Commission's key messages are shown below alongside information on work the Council is currently pursing in these areas:
- **The changing nature of poverty – there are now more households in poverty who are working, than not and that this is a consequence of low pay, inadequate working hours and insecure employment.**

Members should note that 21%, or 1 in 5, of Renfrewshire's children is reported to live in poverty, with this figure rising to over 33% in some areas. Also, although unemployment levels have fallen and are reflected in recent Jobseekers Allowance data (2.9% at the end of January 2015 compared to 4.1% at the end of the same month in 2014), more children are living in families surviving on low wages. The Council's Invest in Renfrewshire programme has delivered real success with nearly 700 companies signed up to the programme, and 520 jobs created with wage subsidies. The Council also promotes the payment of the Living Wage in Renfrewshire, and offers an enhanced wage subsidy to employers where a post is supported financially by the Invest in Renfrewshire programme.

- **The welfare system no longer provides and adequate safety net and is causing hardship for those it is designed to support. The Commission's report cites delays and errors in benefit payments and tougher benefit sanctions.**

Members should note that Paisley jobcentre has the third highest level of benefit sanctions in Scotland. Members will also be aware that the Council has enhanced the support available to the most vulnerable people in Renfrewshire by allocating £100K from its own resources to the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Scottish Welfare Fund remains an essential part of crisis provision and an important mitigating action in the light of the Commission's findings around benefit delays and sanctions.

- **Growing up in poverty has a huge impact on a child's future and limits potential. In general, children from poorer families in Renfrewshire do less well at school than their better-off peers. Addressing the attainment gap between children from poorer families and their better off peers is critical.**

Evidence from Renfrewshire schools presented to the Commission illustrates that similar to Scotland as a whole, there is a clear attainment gap at P2, P5 and S1 between children from low income families and their better off class mates. For all year groups attainment levels for children from the most deprived backgrounds were shown to be consistently lower across 4 indicators (reading, mathematics, mental arithmetic and developed ability) than the level achieved for children from the most affluent homes.

Commissioners recognised the need to building on approaches embodied in the Council's Early Years Strategy, including the Families First project in order to provide Renfrewshire children with the best start in life.

- **Power should be shared, with communities allowed to set their own priorities, and resources devolved to help them achieve them.**

Initiatives like the Building Safer Communities project, the developing Community Safety Partnership and the Stalled Spaces programme will all provide opportunities for partners to work closely with communities - targeting the link between health inequalities, public protection, poverty and disadvantage at the frontline - addressing issues of place and the nature and experience of our communities. These projects will allow partners to support communities as they develop their environment and assets in ways that make them feel safer, more confident and more capable.

- **Tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. The Commission calls on the Council, its Community Planning Partners and wider organisations such as employers and housing providers to work in partnership on shared priorities and deliver real leadership around anti-poverty practice in Renfrewshire and beyond.**

Coordinated preventative action taken by a range of partners provides the best opportunity to tackle poverty. Evidence shows that strategies, and their underlying actions, that are developed collaboratively and are integrated with each organisation's priorities are much more likely to succeed in the longer term. The City Deal Programme and the Paisley Regeneration Strategy offer a real opportunity to put tackling poverty at the centre of the approach to economic regeneration.

## 6. Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission - Recommendations

- 6.1 The Commission's recommendations reflect the change in emphasis and focus that the Commission believes the Council and its partners need to make in order to reduce the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The Commission also applies equal weight to the way organisations should work in order to effectively tackle child poverty. Community involvement and engagement are seen as critical to providing services that support people and address the stigma associated with poverty.
- 6.2 Members will wish to note that while the Commission has directed a number of its recommendations at specific organisations, including the Council, the totality of the response is designed to be delivered in a coordinated and cohesive way across the Community Planning Partnership as this is considered necessary to make the most difference to people directly affected by poverty. The Commission's recommendations are detailed on pages 23 to 25 of the Commission report.
- 6.3 The 24 recommendations are grouped under five priority areas proposed by The Commission. The priority areas are listed below:
- Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
  - Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make

- the most of their money
  - Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families
  - Close the educational gap between children from low income families and their better off peers
  - Create neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live
- 6.4 Two of the recommendations recognise that the Community Planning Partnership should seek to influence wider policy in relation to firstly, what the Commission agreed are the punitive aspects of the current sanctions regime by inviting the Department for Work and Pensions to pilot a new approach to conditionality in Renfrewshire and secondly by calling on the Scottish Government to deliver a change in the way education resources are allocated to better reflect deprivation.
- 6.5 Five of the recommendations are directed specifically at Renfrewshire Council, with the remainder addressed to the Community Planning Partnership as a whole, or specific constituent organisations, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Skills Development Scotland.
- 6.6 Members will wish to note that the recommendations addressed to the Council are in relation to childcare, advice services, educational attainment and securing positive employment outcomes for low income households. They are listed below:
- Ensure high quality, affordable, flexible childcare is widely used by low income families, and is designed to reflect the specific needs of those at highest risk of poverty, such as lone parents and disabled families
  - Improve the impact of local advice and advocacy services to focus on empowering people to prevent financial crisis and increasing take-up of welfare benefits
  - Deliver tailored intervention in schools to address the attainment gap, with specific focus on literacy skills and parental involvement
  - Address the financial barriers to school education, in particular reviewing the cost of school day and the support available for the cost of uniforms and school meals
  - Guarantee the £1.13bn Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal delivers real economic benefits for low income households across Renfrewshire.

## **7. Links to existing priorities and investment**

- 7.1 The Council Plan explains the ambition the Council has for Renfrewshire to make it a fairer more inclusive place. The Council has, in setting its priorities, already invested significant resources in

priority areas intrinsically linked to reducing the causes and impact of poverty in Renfrewshire.

- By prioritising economic regeneration and helping people into work the Council has successfully secured £1bn of City Deal funding for infrastructure projects across the Glasgow city region. This will not only create jobs, but will increase access to jobs for people living in the most deprived communities.
- More people in Renfrewshire are now working than at any time since the start of the recession, with a significant achievement reflected in the reduction in youth unemployment. Ongoing investment in the Council's Invest in Renfrewshire programme now offers an opportunity to target greater support on people furthest from the labour market.
- The investment of £8 million over 3 years in a comprehensive early years strategy, has included the creation of two Families First projects in localities, traditionally seen as two of the most deprived areas in Renfrewshire. This investment has benefited over 230 families in Renfrewshire, providing money into families' pockets and offering enhanced support in the early years.
- The investment in the Council's housing stock has delivered £138m of improvements to tenants' homes over the last 5 years, providing families with more energy efficient homes.
- The Council continues to invest in its Advice Works Service, with resources deployed to support Renfrewshire citizens affected by the impact of the recession and the welfare reform changes generating £14 for the people of Renfrewshire for every £1 spent on the service during 2013/14. Investment in third sector advice partners is also being maintained and longer term funding secured.
- Welfare reform continues to impact on the most vulnerable in Renfrewshire; the Council's wide ranging programme of support includes the allocation of additional resources for Discretionary Housing Payments and Scottish Welfare Fund. When Universal Credit is introduced in Renfrewshire in June 2015, Council and partner services will adapt to reflect the ongoing support required by the people of Renfrewshire.

- 7.2 Members will note that the investment made by the Council in these priority areas has been enhanced through the allocation of additional resources to tackle poverty. In setting the 2014/15 budget the council agreed to set aside £3m of resources to directly target initiatives to tackle poverty in Renfrewshire. These resources were added to as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process, with a further £3m added to this investment. This investment provides an opportunity to support the initiation of targeted activities in priority areas following receipt and consideration of the Commission's recommendations.

## **8. Next steps**

- 8.1 As outlined in this report, the Commission's recommendations have been developed using evidence on the interventions and activities proven to mitigate and minimise the causes and impact of child poverty. This evidence provides rich information not only in relation to interventions that have been found to make a difference in other areas, but also the positive impact of projects and initiatives already underway in Renfrewshire. In considering the strategic response to the Commission's report it will be important to develop a detailed understanding of the evidence used to support the Commission's recommendations, how they map to the Council's priorities and evaluate the potential resource commitment across a range of activities.
- 8.2 The Commission's recommendations are addressed to the council and its community planning partners and members will want to note that the Commission recommends that the Community Planning Partnership reports annually on its progress to tackle poverty in Renfrewshire over the next five years. Members are invited to refer the Commission's report to the Community Planning Partnership Board for consideration and ask that the Community Planning Partnership Board bring forward proposals for a coordinated partnership response to the Commission's findings and recommendations.

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## **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – As outlined at 1.6, the £6M of investment set aside by the Council provides an opportunity to support the initiation of targeted activities in priority areas.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning** – The Community Planning Partnership has set challenging targets for reducing child poverty in Renfrewshire. The Tackling Poverty Commission's recommendations, if implemented, are expected to have a positive impact on reducing the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire. The recommendations contained in this report propose the development of a comprehensive and coordinated Community Planning response to the Commission's recommendations.
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** - None

6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have not been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights because they support further development work to consider and agree more detailed proposals. As these proposals are developed for member consideration, the actual impact of the recommendations will be assessed and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – The council and its partners are committed to break the poverty cycle in Renfrewshire. If the council and partners do not effectively tackle the causes and impacts of poverty in Renfrewshire there will be further polarity of poverty in Renfrewshire, increasing inequality and health inequalities, and greater demand for services. The Tackling Poverty Commission's recommendations propose recommendations that if implemented will reduce the causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

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### **List of Background Papers**

(a) Background Paper 1 - Report of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Chief Executives Service for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Rhona McGrath, Tackling Poverty & Welfare Reform Programme Manager; 0141 618 6879; [Rhona.mcgrath@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Rhona.mcgrath@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk)

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# Tackling Poverty in Renfrewshire

Report of Renfrewshire's  
Tackling Poverty Commission



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## Foreword

Renfrewshire is an area we can be proud of. It has wonderful people living and working in it; thriving businesses and very close-knit communities where people take pride in looking out for each other. The area has a proud past and a promising future. However, we need to nurture and grow our potential; otherwise the deep-rooted deprivation issues which have developed over many decades will persist.

There are local shops here that sell single eggs because families cannot afford to buy half-a-dozen. More than 1 in 5 of our children grows up in poverty. That should shock us all, but more importantly, it should motivate us to do something to change it. Poverty is not inevitable, and that's why Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up in April 2014 to focus on reducing child poverty.

The Commission was formed from a range of experts in education, housing, the voluntary sector, the economy, and people who work every day with residents who live in severe poverty.

We all shared the view that no child should have to live with the insecurity and discomfort that poverty can bring and believe there is absolutely no reason why in the 21st century what your parents or carers earn should determine your life chances.

No two stories that we heard were the same. Many families who struggle to put enough food on the table have someone in the household who works. Others are single parents who can't afford to heat their homes and don't know where to turn. Many other families have been living in poverty for generations.

Throughout 2014 we have gathered a significant amount of evidence across key themes: Education and Attainment; Health and Wellbeing; Housing, Place and Community; Maximising Household Income; and Minimising Household Expenditure. The evidence is unfortunately clear: children who grow up in poverty face greater disadvantages and fewer opportunities in childhood and later in life.

People who live in poverty told us how it feels to wake up every day and not have the same chances as others and what it's like for their children to go without and to feel different from their friends. They gave us many examples of their day-to-day struggles and their feedback has helped to shape our recommendations.

Supporting people to lift themselves out of poverty won't happen overnight, but this report is the start of the next phase—the journey that now lies ahead to improve the lives of Renfrewshire's children.

Renfrewshire's Community Plan sets an ambitious target of reducing child poverty to no more than 15% in any area, by 2023. Child poverty is predicted to rise, and large reductions in public spending are having a major impact on the resources available; it's never been more important to make sure we set clear priorities and evaluate what really works. This report is the result of the Commission's work and sets out a way forward that we hope can change the lives of those living in poverty, for the better.

Our recommendations focus on local service delivery changes we feel will make an impact, on national policy changes we believe should happen, and on putting how people feel at the heart of how organisations respond to poverty.

Finally I want to thank all of those who gave their time and expertise freely to support the work of the Tackling Poverty Commission – the Commissioners, our facilitator Darra Singh, and all of those who gave evidence and who challenged current thinking. Special thanks are owed to the people who responded to surveys and took the time to attend workshops; their stories were the most compelling evidence of all. Most of all, I would like to thank all of those who go about their lives supporting people to deal with poverty and to move out of poverty – they are often unseen and unheard. Their daily actions make life a little bit better for us all.

Councillor Mike Holmes, Chair of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission

## Executive Summary

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up to assess the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire, and make recommendations for the introduction of a strategic approach for the Community Planning Partnership. This Commission is the first of its kind in Scotland, and this is what makes the Commission's recommendations different; they are designed to be delivered in partnership, and focused on making a difference at a local level.

### The key findings of the Commission are:

- Poverty is changing and our response needs to change. There are now more households in poverty who are working, than not. Low pay, inadequate working hours and insecure employment are now key causes of poverty.
- The welfare system no longer provides an adequate safety net and is causing hardship for those it is designed to support, particularly due to delays and errors in benefit payments and tougher benefit sanctions.
- Growing up in poverty can have a huge influence on a child's future. Addressing the attainment gap in schools is critical to make sure children from low-income families are able to achieve their potential.

Our recommendations focus on both the changes the Community Planning Partnership need to make, and how organisations should be working in Renfrewshire to tackle poverty. Our focus has been on what can be achieved here in Renfrewshire, although we have recommended some key areas where the Community Planning Partnership should influence wider Scottish policy.

### "Poverty is costly, wasteful and risky"

Dr Jim McCormick,  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

### The Commission has identified five key priorities for the Community Planning Partners:

- Increasing the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living
- Preventing financial crisis and supporting low-income families to make the most of their money
- Improving levels of physical and mental health of children in low-income families
- Closing the attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better-off peers
- Creating neighbourhoods where people want to live and can afford to live

It is not just what the Community Planning Partnership does that's important, it is also how these things are done. The Commission has made an equally ambitious set of recommendations on how organisations should work, which focus on putting how people feel at the heart of Renfrewshire's response to poverty.

### "I'm unable to focus on anything other than survival. Opportunity is in another world."

Participant, Star Project

## Poverty and Renfrewshire

Child poverty in Renfrewshire is estimated to be 21%, which means more than 7,000 children are living in poverty in Renfrewshire today. Renfrewshire cannot afford poverty. It disadvantages people from cradle to grave, limits people's opportunities and stops people from achieving their potential.

### Levels of poverty in key wards in Renfrewshire



The multiple hits of economic recession, austerity measures and negative elements of welfare reform have all combined to make things worse for people on low incomes. People experiencing poverty often face a 'perfect storm' of low paid employment opportunities, a rise in zero hours contracts, cuts to benefits and a harsher regime of benefit sanctions.

Recent economic growth should not make us complacent. Poverty levels are now rising again, and are predicted to rise again even further. If nothing is done to tackle this rise, more of Renfrewshire's children will be condemned to poor health, education and employment outcomes.

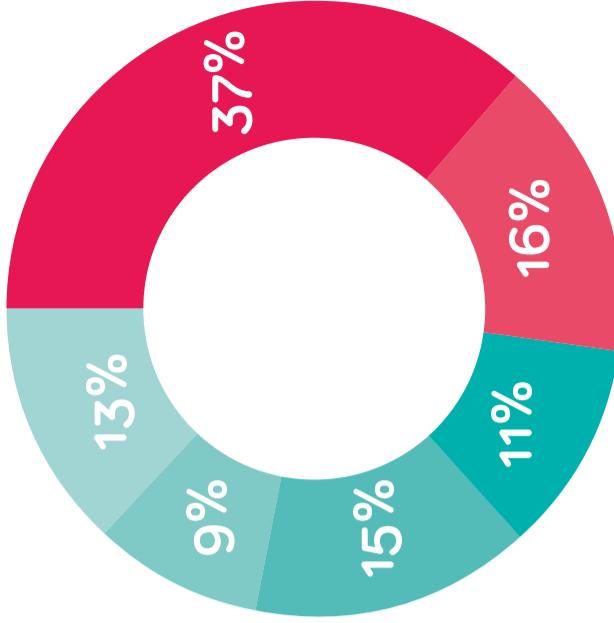
### What is poverty?

A child is considered in 'relative poverty' if they live in a household where the income is less than 60% of the national median income. The Commission, along with the Scottish and UK Governments, use relative poverty because it is an effective measure of whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. This provides a way of understanding how many children live in households that lack what is needed to fully take part in society and which the rest of society take for granted. The Commission has also looked at poverty 'after housing costs' which gives a more accurate picture of families' finances.

Source: Poverty in your area (End Child Poverty, 2014)

**"Poverty is undoubtedly the result of economic and political choices that we make as a society—it is not natural or inevitable"**  
Poverty Alliance

### Families with children are the biggest group in poverty



**Fact:**  
**A parent with two children aged 5 and 14 will be classed as living in poverty if their income (before tax but after housing costs) is less than £269 a week**

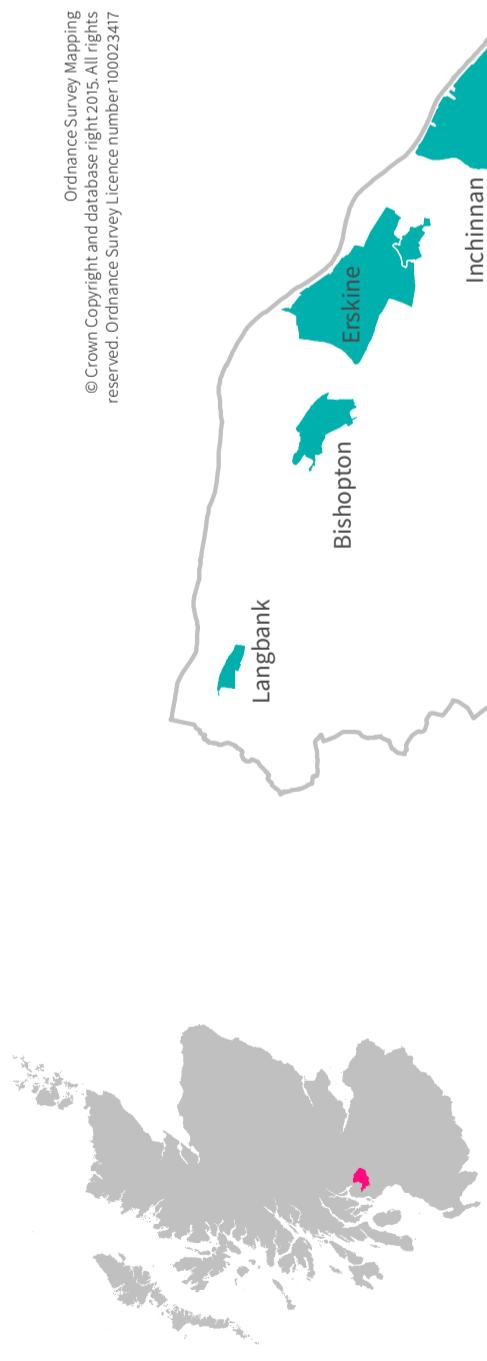
Measures are only part of the picture of the scale and impact of poverty. People living in poverty struggle to access what others take for granted in terms of household items, food and clothing. Not knowing how to pay the next unexpected bill is a common reality, despite skilful budgeting of very little resources. The stigma and feelings of powerlessness can be all consuming and can lead to social isolation and depression.

The geography of poverty has changed. Poverty is less concentrated in 'deprived neighbourhoods' than it has been previously, meaning some of the area-based ways of looking at poverty, such as the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation, can no longer give us a full picture of where poverty is being experienced in our communities.

People don't tend to stay in poverty forever. Most people who experience poverty will do so only for a short time, or will move in and out of poverty throughout their lives.

Some groups of people are more likely to face poverty. For example, workless households, lone parents, disabled working-age adults, care leavers and people renting their homes are all at higher risk of poverty than others.

Source: Households below average income (DWP, 2014)



## The work of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was set up to assess the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.

### Approach

The Commission was asked by Renfrewshire Council and the Community Planning Partnership to make recommendations for the introduction of a strategic and coordinated approach to mitigate and minimise the impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.

In its work, the Commission has considered what is under the direct influence of the Council and its partners, but also the other agencies that should be influenced in order to deliver change. The result is a set of recommendations which are ambitious and challenging not only for the Council and its partners, but also for Scottish and UK government policy.

The terms of reference for Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission can be found at Appendix A.

### Pockets

maximising the financial resources of families on low incomes

### Prospects

improved life chances of children in poverty

### Places

children from low income households live in well-designed, sustainable places

### Membership

Chaired by Councillor Mike Holmes, Deputy Leader of Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission included experts in a range of areas related to tackling poverty, as well as professionals supporting people within our local communities.

A list of Commissioners can be found at Appendix B.

### Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire has a lot to offer both economically and culturally. It is centrally located, next to Glasgow, and in the economic heartland of Scotland which offers many opportunities to its 174,000 residents. Renfrewshire is often described as a microcosm of Scotland; reflective of the country as a whole.

Global employers sit alongside our historic town centres, and the area boasts one of Scotland's biggest retail developments and a major international airport. The Council and its partners have ambitious plans for Renfrewshire, building on the area's location, culture and heritage.

In common with other areas, Renfrewshire has seen a decline in traditional industries such as textiles and weaving, which once employed thousands. Up until the late 20th century, a number of other major manufacturers have reduced in size or moved out of Renfrewshire.

There are a number of areas in Renfrewshire with deep-seated poverty and deprivation, and where people suffer significantly worse outcomes in terms of their health and wellbeing, employment prospects, security and quality of life, compared to more affluent areas.

Commissioners met over a series of monthly meetings to consider each theme:

## **Pockets**

- **Maximising Household Income**
- **Reducing Household Expenditure**

## **Prospects**

- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Education, Attainment and Skills**

## **Places**

- **Housing, Place and Communities**

The Commission identified five key questions when considering the themes, organising its work, findings and emerging recommendations:

- How can we prevent child poverty?
- How can we alleviate the impact of children living in poverty?
- How can we provide families with sustainable routes to escape poverty?
- How can we change attitudes to families and children living in poverty?
- What are the key national policies the Council and its partners shall seek to influence?

## **Places**

- An additional special meeting of the Commission was held to explore Asset Based Community Development and gave Commissioners the opportunity to consider ways of empowering and supporting communities to achieve better outcomes.

A small group of Commissioners took on lead roles for each of the themes, shaping the agenda by identifying key issues, the evidence base, and expert speakers.

## **Call for evidence**

The Commission agreed it was essential to hear from people directly affected by poverty, as well as organisations and groups of interested parties in Renfrewshire and beyond. A ‘Call for evidence’ was launched over the summer of 2014 inviting citizens, groups and organisations to contribute to the evidence base.

The ‘Call for evidence’ was open to organisations and to citizens, through written submissions, surveys, and facilitated sessions with local third sector organisations. People were asked broad and open questions in order to identify potential priority areas:

- What are the causes of poverty?
- What are the key issues that affect people’s ability to get out of poverty?
- What should the tackling poverty strategy priorities be?
- Can you provide examples of what has been successful in tackling poverty?

The responses received from the ‘Call for evidence’ were varied, and contained powerful stories and testimony from more than 100 people living in poverty. Organisations and citizens gave examples of what works to support people in poverty, and what doesn’t. The stigma experienced by people in poverty was a clear theme, and the powerlessness and anxiety felt by people as a consequence.

These findings offer a real challenge to organisations around not just what services they deliver, but how they can involve people to make sure they deliver services that do not stigmatise or exclude.

The results of the ‘Call for evidence’ were presented to the Commission in September 2014, with representatives from voluntary sector organisations invited to share information about the work they had taken forward to gather views from people affected by poverty.

## **What would make a difference?**

**“To be heard, listened to properly and not misjudged or labelled as ‘them’, ‘hard to reach’, ‘unemployable’ etc”**

**Survey respondent**

## Findings Maximising Household Income

Getting a job is seen by many as a guaranteed route out of poverty, but the rise of in-work poverty is a major concern. Currently there are more families in poverty who are working than not working.<sup>1</sup>

More people in Renfrewshire are now in work than during the worst of the recession, but more now earn less than the income needed to provide an acceptable standard of living. This is caused by the combination of part-time and low paid work, rises in the cost of living, changes in tax credit entitlement and the proliferation of zero hours contracts.

Disabled people, carers and lone parents with very young children may experience additional barriers to employment which mean it is unlikely to provide them with a route out of poverty in the near future.

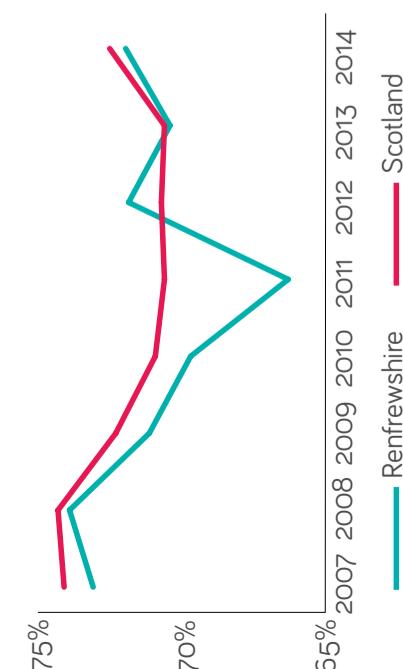
The Living Wage affords people the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families, as it is calculated according to the basic cost of living in the UK. However, it is estimated that around a fifth of Scotland's workforce earn less than the Living Wage. The Living Wage would make a significantly positive impact in the sectors with poor pay such as cleaning, catering, caring and retail. Many employers remain hesitant about adopting the Living Wage, despite concerns about its negative impacts appearing unfounded in evidence.

Paying the Living Wage is a powerful step towards reducing in-work poverty, but for many employers this may not be enough. Employers can also make an important contribution in other ways, for example, making sure staff with fewer skills have access to quality on-the-job training, providing support with costs such as travel and childcare, and contributing towards staff pensions. If adopted by employers, these actions can all make a dent in the risk of poverty—now and in the future.

### Renfrewshire employment levels

(in poverty profile) 2007–2014

Source: Households below average income (DWP, 2014)



Youth employment levels are rising across Renfrewshire, but an increasing number of young people who face significant barriers to employment are seeking support. The challenge is now to provide more intensive support for these young people, as well as supporting older adults looking for help to access education and develop the skills they need to access work, or to progress at work.

**“People want to go to work but think why when I’m only going to make £10 after paying nurseries, rent, lunch, expenses etc. when I’m spending all that time away from my wean... the nurseries say you’re not a priority... surely if you’re trying to work then you are”**

Participant, Childcare First

rationed more than other areas in Scotland and Renfrewshire families are losing out.

A key barrier to maximising family income is expensive and inflexible childcare provision. Childcare has not kept pace with changing work patterns so parents, particularly lone parents, are often unable to move into work, increase hours, or progress at work. Again, the way that benefits interact with paid employment means that paid work can leave parents worse off.

### Case Study: Sanctions

Stephen is a father who was sanctioned for being 15 minutes late for an appointment with the Jobcentre. His income was reduced by £73 per week, for 13 weeks. He only received two hardship payments of around £44 each during the 13 week sanction period because he was not informed that he still had to sign on every two weeks to access them. His sanction led to him becoming homeless, at first sleeping on a friend's floor and then sleeping rough. He was assaulted and hospitalised during this time and has had no contact with his children since becoming homeless.

**Fact:**  
**Paisley Jobcentre Plus has the highest number of sanctions in the west of Scotland**

The impact is especially felt among young adults aged under 25. Poor communications and unsympathetic and remote decision making mean claimants do not fully understand what they need to do and where to go for help.<sup>6</sup> Sanctions are preventable and early intervention to offer advice and advocacy should be prioritised to support people to avoid being sanctioned.

**“Low wages, lack of job security and underemployment mean that for many families work is no longer a route out of poverty”**

Poverty Alliance

Access to the locally based Scottish Welfare Fund resourced by the Scottish Government provides a valuable financial safety net for families in crisis. However in Renfrewshire these funds are under increasing pressure. Although Renfrewshire Council is one of the few authorities to top up the fund with Council resources, the evidence indicates that support still needs to be

## Findings Reducing Household Expenditure

Poverty is not just about how much money is coming into a household; it's also about having enough money to meet basic needs.

Inflation rates for basic goods and services have risen 50% in the last ten years. This is faster than wages or benefits and tax credits have risen, and even higher for people living in poverty.<sup>7</sup> In particular, major rises in food and energy prices, rents and childcare over the last few years have made it hard for many to make ends meet. Also, basic needs vary with a person's individual circumstances. For example, disabled people and people living in rural areas may face additional costs. Although the overall inflation rate has fallen recently (especially so for petrol prices), low income households continue to face greater cost pressures than the population as a whole.

### Inflation rates

Source: A minimum income standard for the UK (JRF, 2014)

**cost of basket of essentials is up 28%**

**28%**

**minimum wage is up 14%**

**average wage is up 9%**



**"We estimate the [Poverty Premium] reached an average of £1,639 a year at the end of 2013"**  
**Save the Children**

Poor families often pay more for many basic goods and services such as heating, food and financial services. This is sometimes referred to as the 'Poverty Premium'.<sup>8</sup> While much of this 'premium' is determined by the providers of goods and services, another key factor is that people on low-incomes are less likely to be active consumers. Low income consumers are less likely to switch suppliers and shop around, partly due to a lack of access to 'enabling goods' that give consumers advantages e.g. a bank account or internet access.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the rising costs of energy, evidence shows people living in poverty pay over the odds for the energy they do buy, due to higher tariffs and more expensive bill payment methods. With almost a third of households in Renfrewshire living in fuel poverty, families risk not only having cold homes but having to cut back on other essentials to afford to keep warm. For some, this is a choice between heating or eating.

**"If I can't afford heating I go to bed, we all have an early night—or we sit with blankets around us, the kids think it's funny"**  
**Participant, Star Project**

The rise of foodbanks is strong evidence for the growing pressure on household finances. However, it is benefit delays, sanctions and administrative errors that are driving people into crisis, with more than half of foodbank users there as a consequence of the inefficient operation of the

benefits system.<sup>10</sup> People turn to foodbanks as a last resort, often not knowing what crisis support they might be entitled to. While foodbanks are an important part of supporting people in crisis, the Commission does not accept that foodbanks should become readily accepted as a formal provision.

**Fact:**  
**Renfrewshire has the third busiest foodbank in Scotland**

Improving access to affordable credit is an important part of making sure families are able to manage limited finances.<sup>11</sup> Many consumers on lower incomes want to maintain control over their finances, and often value control and security over choice. It is clear support is needed to help people develop their financial capability and make the most of their money, particularly with the introduction of Universal Credit on the horizon. Evidence suggests peer education programmes may be one of the most effective ways to build financial capability.

Credit unions have an important role to play as community-based alternatives to high street banking. They can offer a valuable route to savings and more affordable credit for low income families but are currently limited in their anti-poverty impact by the need to balance lending and collecting savings.

**"It's absolutely shocking that in 2014 we rely on foodbanks"**

**Participant, Our Place, Our Families**

**Case Study:  
Recovery Across Mental Health**

Elaine is a lone parent who was suffering from severe anxiety and was referred to the financial literacy service from Recovery Across Mental Health (RAMH) First Crisis Service. She had been off her work as a nurse due to her anxiety for a few weeks and was feeling overwhelmed by financial issues to the point where she felt at risk from suicidal thoughts. She had arrears with her rent, putting her tenancy at risk and owed money to the local credit union, student loans and was struggling to buy food and to travel to and from her son's nursery.

RAMH agreed a plan to support her to liaise on her behalf with the credit union, student loans, and her landlord, to refer her to advice works for benefits advice and income maximisation and the service applied for a travel card to assist with travel costs.

RAMH managed to arrange affordable payment plans for her credit union and student loan debts and applied for a free travel card so Elaine could get her and her son to and from nursery. She felt less anxious and her feelings of hopelessness that were leading to suicidal thoughts were reduced.

## Findings Health and Wellbeing

In Renfrewshire, health inequalities have grown significantly.  
Renfrewshire has a particularly low life expectancy and a large life expectancy gap between richer and poorer areas.

**Fact:**  
**A boy born in Bishopston lives on average 16.4 years longer than a boy born in Ferguslie Park**

While having a low-income isn't the cause of these things, it's essential to understand these choices are strongly socially patterned, and can leave a lasting impact.

Austerity policies are having a detrimental impact on mental and physical health, and deteriorating mental health is becoming a central public health concern. Renfrewshire has seen an increase in suicide rates, anxiety, depression and psychiatric hospitalisations. People living in poverty are more likely to suffer poor mental health, and poor parental mental health can have a significant impact on a child's development.

Rates of child poverty are higher in lone parent households. The pressures of living in poverty mean that any family might struggle to cope – and for parents bringing up children on their own, the pressures are often greater.<sup>13</sup> The mental health and wellbeing of families living in poverty, and particularly lone parents, should become a new priority for Renfrewshire, with specific action to address isolation, maximise incomes and widen opportunities to learn, volunteer and work.

The first years of someone's life have a huge influence on their future. Children's developmental outcomes are affected from before they are born, and throughout their childhood. Poverty has a significant and adverse impact on these developmental outcomes.

Women from low-income families are more likely to be in poorer health when pregnant. In Renfrewshire, almost half of low-weight live births come from the most deprived areas. Women in these areas are three times more likely to smoke when pregnant, and less likely to breastfeed.

Young people living in poverty are more likely to smoke, less likely to eat healthily, more likely to have behavioural or emotional problems and more likely to experience teenage pregnancy.<sup>12</sup>

**"Not only does poverty and deprivation increase the risk of teenage pregnancy, but experience of teenage pregnancy can result in negative outcomes for both the teenage parent and their child"**

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

### Case Study: Barnardos Threads

Joanne, 18, approached Barnardos Threads for support for her and her new partner when pregnant with her second child. At the time the young family were facing eviction from privately rented accommodation. With support from her Threads keyworker, Joanne secured temporary accommodation through homeless services and attended a pre-natal group while receiving one-to-one support with her benefits and to secure a permanent tenancy.

Just as the family were ready to move into new tenancy, her partner secured a job with a zero hours contract. This affected the couple's claim for benefits and also added difficulties to their social fund application for furniture.

Joanne has been prescribed anti-depressants as she feels stressed about her situation and her break-up. She is managing to care for her two children but said she has found the housing arrears and benefits situation too difficult to cope with on her own. Threads continue to work with Joanne with the intention of supporting her to independently manage her finances in the future.

Joanne's partner was unable to sustain his job due to significant mental health difficulties. The couple made a claim for ESA, which took

**Fact:**  
**The rate of delivery of teenage pregnancy in the most deprived areas is almost ten times the rate of delivery in the least deprived areas**

## Findings Education, Attainment and Skills

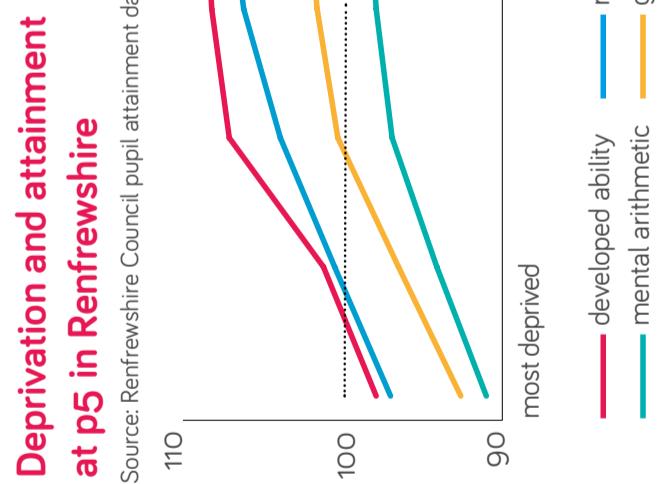
In general, children from poorer families in Renfrewshire do less well at school than their better-off peers.

The gap starts early in life, widens at every stage of school and can have life-long consequences.<sup>15</sup> Young people from poorer families are less likely to go into further and higher education, more likely to be unemployed, work part-time, earn less and be in low-paid jobs.

The attainment gap is an issue for every school in Renfrewshire to tackle, and is not limited to specific schools or areas.<sup>16</sup> This challenge needs to be addressed at Council, school and teacher level.

The Commission heard what works to reduce the gap in educational attainment and that schools need to be able to identify the interventions that are most likely to succeed in their particular school environment, and implement them effectively. While the use of attainment data has improved very recently, teachers need access to enough real-time information to make sure they are able to get the best from their pupils in the classroom.

The evidence is clear that low-income families don't want any less for their children, and young people don't lack aspirations, but they can go off-track.<sup>17</sup> However, the challenge is one for parents too; as parents' involvement can have a huge impact on a child's attainment.



It's also clear the costs of the school day are rising: uniforms, classroom equipment, school trips and charity events are all putting increasing pressure on household budgets. This creates stigma and anxiety for parents and children, and puts up more barriers to attainment.<sup>18</sup>

**Fact:**  
**The gap between children from low-income families and high-income household starts early. By age five, there is a gap of ten months in problem solving development and 13 months in vocabulary**

Parents need the skills and capacity to support their children's learning, and to make home a positive learning environment. Supporting parents to encourage early language development and literacy skills in their child's early years would have a significant impact on narrowing the attainment gap. As children move into their school years, there is a need to re-frame the relationship between schools and parents, identifying the

**“The school is always coming up with wee trips and things like that and then you're caught out. It's not very good that they don't give you enough notice. You know, and maybe it's only two or three pound and they don't really see that two and three pounds is a big issue, but when you're struggling it is”**

### Child Poverty Action Group respondent

#### Case Study: Cost of the School Day Project

Child Poverty Action Group is currently working with Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel on its 'Cost of a School Day' project. The project involves working with pupils and staff in eight Glasgow schools to identify where problems lie for children from low-income households. From uniform, travel and meals to resources, school trips and after-school activities, the project aims to identify how low-income children and young people's participation and experiences are affected by the ways in which schools organise and implement the school day. Early findings suggest that costs relating to travel, completing homework, school trips, uniforms, clubs, snacks and meals can all put additional pressure on low income families. Children are also keenly aware of the stigma that can be attached to poverty.

**“It is unacceptable that in the 21st century, how much your parents earn affects how likely you are to do well at school”**

**Professor Sue Ellis,  
University of Strathclyde**

It is also essential to look at how we invest in adult skills. Poorly skilled adults are less likely to receive investment or support to improve their skills, which can severely limit opportunities for in-work progression and prevent them escaping poor wages or insecure employment. Both employers and community learning need to reflect this disadvantage in the way that they invest in training and development.

## Findings Housing, Place and Communities

Good quality, affordable housing has a huge impact on people's lives. People living in poverty generally have less good, less desirable housing and have fewer choices about where they can live. The housing waiting lists of the Council and its housing association partners are packed with people wanting to live in Renfrewshire, while the likelihood of being offered a decent home in a place they want to live is reducing.

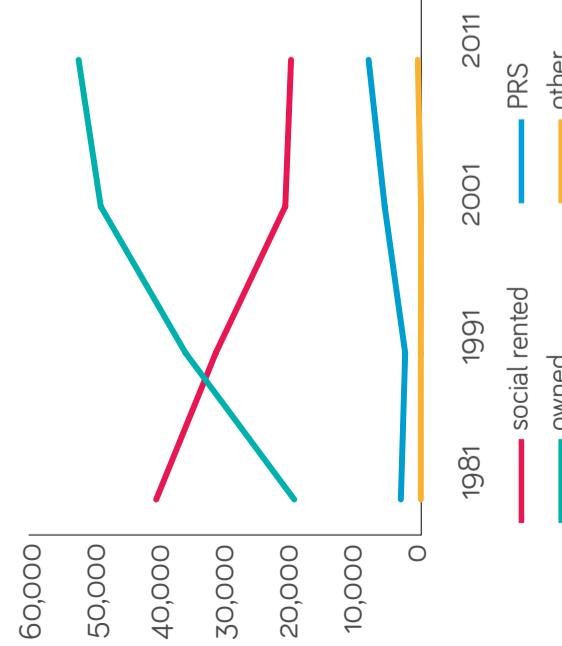
Poor housing can affect the health of a family, and could affect child development, health and learning.<sup>20</sup> Settled accommodation is a key requirement for securing and sustaining a job, but it also anchors a family in a community and allows them to invest in that community and build its resilience.

The housing landscape is changing. There has been a slowdown in the building of Council and other social housing and the 'Right to Buy' scheme means there are more owner occupiers, but less Council housing. There are more people renting, both from the private rented sector and from registered social landlords.

Most of Renfrewshire's social housing stock is flats, making it very difficult to meet the aspiration of low income families who want to live in households with gardens and a front-and-back-door. While there has been some local success in improving the housing standards of Renfrewshire's existing housing stock through the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, the Commission heard of significant challenges in developing sites for housing investment. Partnerships with both Housing Associations and other funders will become even more important in order for there to be significant investment in affordable housing.

### Housing tenures over time

Source: Renfrewshire Council pupil attainment data (2014)



**"You need to be able to travel to stuff and also to know you can afford it when you get there. I just can't afford it and sometimes I feel like I am always saying no and everyone else is saying yes."**

Participant, Star Project

or family involved. It unsettles neighbourhoods and can contribute to the stigma of an area. There are a number of successful programmes in Renfrewshire which show that for vulnerable tenants across a range of tenures, support in areas such as budgeting or employability is what really makes a difference to securing and sustaining a home.

There is a clear link between the social housing that is in 'low demand' and more deprived neighbourhoods in Renfrewshire. Despite significant investment in the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods, there are evident frustrations about lack of progress that are equally shared between organisations and residents.

**Fact:**  
**Private sector rents are estimated to be 50% higher than council rents in Renfrewshire**

Supporting people to sustain tenancies and preventing homelessness are essential parts of tackling poverty. When tenancies turnover, it can have a huge adverse impact on the individual

**Fact:**  
**There has been a £138m investment to ensure all social housing in Renfrewshire meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard**

**"We need more people who are for the community (Ferguslie) there used to be wee community centres in the top, middle and bottom end of (Ferguslie) with play schemes and everything every summer and they were run by people in those areas, community minded and the best interest of the people who live there, they made the biggest difference"**

Participant, Childcare First

### Case Study: No Substitute for Life

Beginning in 2013, 'No Substitute for Life' has been led by volunteers from Ferguslie Park who had personal experience of the impact of suicide, with a number of friends and family having taken their own lives.

The programme aims to raise public awareness of suicide prevention, provide practical support to those affected, and work with range of partners to ensure suicide prevention is 'everyone's business'.

The programme holds an annual memorial football tournament that involves local residents and attracts more than 600 attendees. The tournament acts as a platform for organisations who are working to tackle the taboo and stigma that prevent young people and particularly young men, from talking about mental health and suicide.

**"Nothing about us, without us, is for us."**

Poverty Truth Commission

## Recommendations

The Commission has made two different types of recommendations, which describe not just what the Community Planning Partners should do, but also how organisations should work in order to tackle poverty. We consider these two sets of recommendations to have equal weight.



**Increase the number of households who can access employment that provides an acceptable standard of living**

The Commission's recommendations focus on what should be the priority areas for the Community Planning Partnership. The recommendations are designed to be delivered in partnership, and really make a difference at a local level.

Our focus has been on what can be achieved here in Renfrewshire, and as such we consider all the recommendations to be within the power of the Community Planning Partnership. We have recommended some key areas where the Community Planning Partnership should influence wider Scottish policy. The recommendations provide scope for partners to implement them in the most appropriate way, and in line with our recommendations on how organisations should work.

### Case Study: Our Place, Our Families

Our Place, Our Families was originally established in 2011 by local parents in Moorpark, Renfrew, as a mutual support group which aimed to provide help and advice to local people. With BIG Lottery funding, the organisation now operates in a wider area, has its own premises and employs three part-time members of staff and a large team of volunteers.

The group provides a range of services, with the aim of helping people to become more employable, improving health, getting local young people involved in physical activity and bringing people together in the community.

**"Benefit sanctions are inhumane, and can only serve to make a bad situation worse."**

Sir Harry Burns,  
University of Strathclyde

Local areas are most successful when local people are in the driving seat and where the community have the control to determine and design their neighbourhoods. Services are often structured around the needs of the organisation delivering the service and not the communities they are designed to serve. Public bodies often look at what is missing from an area or its flaws, rather than working with communities to understand their priorities, strengths and capacity.<sup>21</sup>

The Commission has heard about excellent work already under way or planned in Renfrewshire. We have chosen not to restate this within our recommendations, and instead have chosen to focus on the areas that requiring a greater emphasis or shift in focus.

Ensure high-quality, affordable, flexible childcare is widely used by low income families, and is designed to reflect the specific needs of those at highest risk of poverty, such as lone parents and disabled families

Renfrewshire Council

Review feasibility of providing time-limited free public transport to support people to move into work or training

Community Planning Partnership

Work in partnership with employers to prioritise high-quality on-the-job training, with a particular emphasis on supporting lone parents to progress at work.

Skills Development Scotland

## **Pockets**

**Prevent financial crisis and support low income families to make the most of their money**

**Improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families**

Increase financial capability of low income families by investing in peer-led financial education programmes

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Use bargaining power to address the ‘poverty premium’ imposed on low-income consumers by lenders and service providers

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Improve the impact of local advice and advocacy services to focus on empowering people to prevent financial crisis and increasing take-up of welfare benefits

[Renfrewshire Council](#)

Provide access to energy advice for all low-income households in Renfrewshire

[Renfrewshire Council](#)

Build local connections between primary healthcare and financial inclusion, and co-locate primary care with relevant support services where possible

[NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#)

## **Prospects**

**Close the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better-off peers**

Extend the Healthier Children project across all primary care and community services in Renfrewshire

[NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#)

Target sufficient resource to improve the health of mothers and babies living in, or at risk of, poverty through both universal health visiting provision, and dedicated projects such as the Family Nurse Partnership

[NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#)

Develop a cohesive partnership approach to supporting youth mental health, which equips organisations to deliver support, respond to mental health distress and build young peoples’ resilience

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Allocate school resources to reflect levels of deprivation, and specifically link these resources to closing the attainment gap and ensuring more pupils from low income families reach positive destinations

[Scottish Government](#)

Address the financial barriers to school education, in particular reviewing the ‘cost of school day’ and the support available for the cost of uniforms and school meals

[Renfrewshire Council](#)

Build strong partnerships between education providers and local industry, to improve vocational pathways; to ensure provision of meaningful work experience; and ensure employers play a pivotal role in the skills development of young people and improve the level of recruitment directly from education.

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

## **Places**

**Create neighbourhoods where people want to live, and can afford to live**

Develop funding partnerships with independent funders that create new opportunities for neighbourhood regeneration

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Pilot a regeneration programme which is co-produced with local people and enables them to shape resources around community priorities and assets

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Guarantee the £1.13bn Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal delivers real economic benefits for low income households across Renfrewshire

[Renfrewshire Council](#)

Develop a rent setting framework to minimise rent increases across the social housing sector across Renfrewshire and reduce the amount families have to pay towards their rent

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Build on past successful partnership working with local Housing Associations to enable an increase in the supply of affordable housing for people that need it and in places they want to live in

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

Build strong partnerships between education providers and local industry, to improve vocational pathways; to ensure provision of meaningful work experience; and ensure employers play a pivotal role in the skills development of young people and improve the level of recruitment directly from education.

[Community Planning Partnership](#)

## How organisations should work

It is not just what you do that's important; it's also how you do it. Through the Commission meetings, there have been some clear messages about how organisations should act and what good services should look like.

### It is clear services designed without people who

have direct experience of poverty often fail to meet their needs. The Commission heard loud and clear that people living in poverty in Renfrewshire often feel stigmatised and excluded from the very services that are meant to help them.

The Commission has seen an extensive amount of evidence relating to poverty, and Renfrewshire needs to start looking at this information more intelligently. This means using what we know about poverty to shape our decisions, but also making sure a lack of information doesn't stop us from making progress.

The Commission recommends the Community Planning Partners put the following principles into practice in both the delivery of the Commission's recommendations, and in their organisations' day-to-day work.

### Address stigma

Make sure all staff know that tackling poverty is part of their job, especially on the front line

Understand how the stigma of poverty affects how people access services

### Involve people

Create opportunities for peer support and development

Use co-production to design services wherever possible

### Remove barriers

Co-locate services, making them easy to access

Provide holistic support through a single, trusted point of contact

### Use evidence

Make evidence-based decisions, but understand how much evidence is 'good enough'

Focus resources on what has been proven to work, support what looks promising until we have better evidence about its impact, and start to disinvest in what isn't working

### **"Get the information right, make sure staff know and share the information with people who can share it with us"**

### Participant, Star Project

### Use of resources

Make the best use of combined resources to target inequality, to maximise impact

Set measurable and realistic targets for achieving greater fairness across all areas of our organisations' activity

## What happens next?

Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission has, over the last few months, met to consider poverty in Renfrewshire alongside reviewing the evidence related to poverty both in Scotland and across the UK. It was always the intention that the Commission would have a relatively short life, so its work has concluded with the publication of its report and recommendations.

It will be for the Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership to respond to the recommendations both as a partnership and as individual organisations. Making the changes proposed by the Commission will need strong leadership, a real desire to make changes and determination to see this through despite major resource challenges.

In setting up the Commission, Renfrewshire Council and the Renfrewshire Community Planning partners agreed to the development of a Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Strategy. The Tackling Poverty Commission looks forward to the development and implementation of a robust strategy which will deliver on both the recommendations, and the way the Commission have recommended that organisations work.

The Commission recommends the Community Planning Partnership reports annually on its progress for the next five years. It is essential local people have a role in defining and determining the success factors of the Community Planning Partnership's work in this area, and that progress reporting is done in a way which is transparent, accessible and meaningful across the community as a whole.

Tackling poverty is everyone's responsibility. The Commission calls on all named organisations to work in a strong and coordinated way, and invites wider Renfrewshire organisations and community to consider how they contribute to the tackling poverty agenda.

Try to identify families who are likely to struggle, and reach them before they do

## **Appendix A**

### Tackling Poverty Commission—Terms of Reference

#### **Terms of reference**

The Tackling Poverty Commission is being established by Renfrewshire Council to make an assessment of the nature, causes and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire and to make recommendations for the deployment of a strategic and coordinated approach involving Community Planning Partners that will mitigate and minimise the impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire.

The Commission will consider the nature, extent and impact of child poverty in Renfrewshire Drawing as far as possible on published data and reports on the cause and impact of child poverty, the Commission will invite evidence from a range of interested parties across Renfrewshire and beyond and, as required, hear evidence from an agreed cross section of individuals and organisations with experience in the matter area over the course of the work.

The Commission will prepare a report for the Council and its partners that details the causes, impact and nature of child poverty in Renfrewshire and make recommendations to the Council and its Community Planning Partners on the priority actions required to make a direct impact on child poverty in Renfrewshire.

#### **Support**

Secretariat, administrative and policy support for the Commission will be provided by Renfrewshire Council.

The Commission will consider evidence of what has worked elsewhere to reduce the causes and impact of child poverty, and may recommend testing of new interventions in the Renfrewshire area over the course of the work.

The Commission will consider the efforts that have already been made by the council, its partners and other key agencies, to mitigate the impact of child poverty in order to understand the effectiveness of these efforts in delivering improved outcomes in Renfrewshire.

#### **Time scale**

It is envisaged that the Commission will hear evidence monthly over a 6 month period commencing in April 2014. The Commission will then consider and develop its findings and submit its recommendations to the Council and the Community Planning Board for comment, prior to consideration by the Council of its updated Anti-Poverty Strategy and priorities for 2014-17.

## **Appendix B**

### List of Commissioners

- Councillor Mike Holmes, Deputy Leader of Renfrewshire Council (Chair)  
Sir Harry Burns, Professor of Global Medicine, University of Strathclyde  
John Carnochan, Knowledge Exchange Consultant at the University of St Andrews  
Audrey Cumberford, Principal and Chief Executive of West College Scotland  
Dr Linda de Caestecker, Director of Public Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde  
Prof. Sue Ellis, Reader in Education, University of Strathclyde  
Fraser Falconer, Former National Head of BBC Children in Need  
Robert Johnston, Head Teacher of St Benedict's High School  
Dr Jim McCormick, Scotland Adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
Hanna McCulloch, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, Child Poverty Action Group  
Ian McLean, Chief Executive of Bridgewater Housing Association  
Alan McNiven, Chief Executive of Engage Renfrewshire  
Roslyn McVeigh, Renfrewshire Foodbank Manager  
Dave Moxham, Deputy General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress  
David Nicholls, Head Teacher of Gleniffer High School  
Alison Watson, Deputy Director, Shelter Scotland

Facilitated by Darra Singh OBE, Ernst & Young

This report can be found online at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/tacklingpoverty) along with further appendices which detail the supporting evidence considered by the Commission.

**Appendix C**  
List of contributors to Commission meetings

**Appendix D**  
Engagement activity report and responses

**Appendix E**  
Minutes of Commission meetings

**Appendix F**  
Evidence overviews from themed meetings

**Appendix G**  
Slide packs from Commission meetings

**Appendix H**  
Poverty Profile (Summary Version)

**Appendix I**  
Poverty Profile (Detailed Version)

**Appendix J**  
Commission's reading lists  
  
If you would like to request this report in another language or format,  
please telephone 0300 300 1422 or email your request to  
[customerservices.contact@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices.contact@renfrewshire.gov.uk).

## Endnotes

- 1 Poverty and income inequality in Scotland: 2012/13, Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2014
- 2 Living Wage research for KPMG, Structural analysis of Hourly Wages and Current Trends in Household Finances, 2014
- 3 Evaluating the economic impact of the Glasgow Living Wage, Employment Research Institute, Matthew Dutton, 2014
- 4 The Local Impact of Welfare Reform: A report for Scottish Parliament, Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill, 2014
- 5 Sanctioned: what benefit? A report on how sanctions are operating from the experience of Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau, 2014
- 6 Independent review of the operation of Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions validated by the Jobseekers Act 2013, Matthew Oakley , 2014
- 7 Cost of living and poverty evidence review, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014
- 8 The UK Poverty Rip-Off, the Poverty Premium, Save the Children, 2010
- 9 Addressing the poverty premium: Approaches to regulation, Donald Hirsch, 2013
- 10 Emergency Use Only: understanding and reducing the use of foodbanks in the UK, 2014
- 11 Poverty, debt and credit: An expert-led review, University of Bristol, 2014
- 12 Health Consequences of Poverty for Children, End Child Poverty, [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)
- 13 Poverty, Parenting and Poor Health, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2013
- 14 GP experience of the impact of austerity on patients and general practices in very deprived areas; GPs at the Deep End, 2012
- 15 Closing the attainment gap in Scottish Education, Edward Sosu and Sue Ellis for Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014
- 16 Educational attainment in Renfrewshire, Presentation by Robert Naylor, Director of Education, August 2014
- 17 The role of aspirations, attitudes and behaviour in closing the education attainment gap, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012
- 18 Learning Lessons: Young People's Views on Poverty and Education in Scotland, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People & Save the Children, 2014
- 19 Education working for all! Commission for developing Scotland's young workforce final report, 2014
- 20 The links between housing and poverty: An evidence review, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2013
- 21 Growing community from inside out to tackle poverty, Presentation by Cormac Russell, September 2014
- 22 Report of the Smith Commission for further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament, November 2014

